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BY

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AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BEGIN TO LIVE FOREVER"

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1 Cor. xv. 35

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JOSEPH MERLIN HODSON

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BEGIN TO LIVE FOREVER"

NEW YORK

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & CO.

(INCORPORATED)

[c1894]

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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A.

But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?

Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own.

All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another

glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. — I CORINTHIANS XV. (R. V.).

WITH WHAT MANNER OF BODY DO THEY COME?

WHEN you sow grain, that which you have seen and handled dies; but the seed-life of the grain, which you cannot see, quickens and grows; and God gives the life a new body, that it may again be grain. The old wheat kernel dies, and for a time the form is lost to human eyes; while through the green blade and the stalk the life goes on to make the little golden,

oval, creased form, and it is again wheat to our eyes. The pattern was somewhere, and comes again into sight because it gathers visible matter about it; but for eyes that can see *life*, it was never lost. All the form is in the life. The old grain may be broken, shrunken, wrinkled; but the new grain comes perfectly, because injury to the form, or age, does not break or shrink or wrinkle the life.

God also clothes life with many kinds of flesh in this world, — flesh of birds, and of

beasts, and of fishes. He has so arranged it that life does it for itself, and no microscope is powerful enough to discover how it is done. The microscope has found bioplasts, the little workshops in which the process of making bodies and weaving them about life goes on, so that it may move from place to place, and live in this world as birds and beasts and fishes; but God's plan, by which even this lower order of life makes a home for itself, is too wonderful for the human mind.

Then God has made things as widely different as the sun and the moon and all stars: why should we not believe He is able to provide those who have lived upon this earth with celestial bodies? Our friends, beautiful as they are, and much as we have loved their human form, die in corruption; but they are raised in incorruption: they die in dishonor; they are raised in glory: they die in weakness; they are raised in power: they die in a natural body; they are raised in a spiritual body. Just

as certainly as there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body. Adam was created, and all his race are born living souls; but Christ is a life-giving spirit. Adam was earthly, and from him all inherit an earthly life; but Christ is heavenly, and all who are like Him are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

* * *

We shall "come" with a spiritual body. We shall "come" *ourselves*, our spirit in a spiritual

body, — the life that is in us, in God's other way, having made for itself a body fitted for the new conditions of a celestial world.

* * *

May we not start at this point to think, and to see, and then go on? — "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and the imagination serves faith. The imagination, faith, and feeling, — all serve our reason. When our friends die, we turn aside from *them* still living to bury the

dead, — the body. Sorrow comes, and we fix our attention upon the mouldering wheat kernel, and do not see the quickening life. The death of the form numbs the brain, and chills the heart. We weep, blinding our eyes with tears. The clay was so precious, and the sense of loss and separation so keen! Our friends bend their eyes down with us, and speak confused words of the dead into our confusion. Then comes the sweet, sad preparation for burial. It must be thought of. The eyes must

be closed, the hands tenderly crossed; there must be the decorous habits of interment, suitable garments, flowers of funeral fragrance, subdued religious services, the gentle bearing of the body away, the careful moulding up of the soil, and a granite shaft forever holding up a silent finger and saying "dead." We stay about the part that dies, lingering in fond, morbid imagination, until we see it all the way back to dust. But death is the moment of quickening! Why not follow the

life, — the spirit released, — our friends on, on living!

> Exultation is the going
> Of an inland soul to sea, —
> Past the houses, past the headlands,
> Into deep eternity.

But who can follow a spirit into "deep eternity"? We may do so if we think of our friends just as we knew them, for they were always spirits. It was the spirit we loved. The change is from a natural body to a spiritual body. We

often saw a change of clothing, while they were with us; but it made only the difference in them, that when it was very comfortable or beautiful, they were gladdened and brightened by it. The change of clothing was often a great change in appearance, almost like a new body; and sometimes the joy of the occasion on which it was worn transfigured the face into unusual brightness. This did not change them from the persons we loved; it simply made them more beautiful. We shall think of our

friends living and real, gone only into a realm where life is easier and happier, distant from us somewhat in minutes or years, perhaps not at all in miles; but whether far or near, now and forever the same persons who were with us in this life, and whom we loved.

It is not necessary that we should even give up the form in which we knew our friends. The form was not all in the clay, which had been moulded by the living spirit, for that at death became only "the remains," and we laid

it tenderly away; and we will now still love and see all that we ever knew of them, but clad incorruptibly, glorified, and come into all the powers of a spiritual body. May it not be the spirit, the immortal spirit which we all possess, that is now the inner artist, rounding out the human form, giving it not only expression and character, but its very shape.

All messengers from the other world that have been visible in this world have looked like human beings. Our Lord, born into human

life, never ceasing to be God, grew to be like us in form. All revelation of God, who is a Spirit, represents Him in the form of which we are "the very image." May not many forms familiar to us on this earth be but the local expression of forms that are spiritual? And of all created things, we have not yet seen anything so beautiful as the human form. Why should it not be eternal. When it expresses the God-like spirit, it becomes, even in physical deformity or worn by disease, more and more beautiful. May it not

be that, when the body is spiritual, there is a face to glow with goodness, eyes to change and soften and brighten with the love that is deeper and more intense than it can be here? We certainly cannot think of our friends to our comfort except we retain the continuity of their being; and what necessity of truth would compel us to etherealize them into unthinkable and formless beings? Perhaps, in our theological fear lest we should think those of the spirit realm too much like ourselves, we have made them too

white and dim and shadowy, — far-away ghostly beings, scarcely more than a breath, and so to us nothing. In their honest effort to turn the human mind from what they conceived to be a wrong direction, theologians long ago invented a terrible word, *anthropomorphism*, which perhaps was useful in the days when idolatry was possible; but its ugly sound has been so frightful in its warning that it has wrought a nightmare of vague fancies, preventing the natural interpretation and inferences of the little

revelation which has been given to cheer our race, ever made sad by the separation which must result, as generation after generation passes on.

Some light has come, and it has come from the other side — from God. The great Lick telescope has been mounted high up on the rugged top of Mount Hamilton, on the western coast of the American Continent. On the way to it, one gradually leaves behind him the city,

farm homes, fields, vegetation, and comes at last to the cold, silent isolation of night on the mountain. Then at the hour for observation, the huge telescope is made to sweep the heavens; and Mars, a small glistening point, is fixed in the lens. But with this powerful instrument it is now more than a point of light, it is a world. Perhaps there is an atmosphere. Are those regular lines not canals? May there not be intelligent beings there? Oh, if they could but signal to us; if there could but come some

message from the other side! The eye at last grows weary with the eager pressure of the soul to see and know; but the whole study is from our side, — from a little human point on our far-away earth. No sign, no message, has ever come from the planet Mars.

Human nature looks still more eagerly into the future. It studies itself. It studies Nature to know its Creator; but a message has come from Him, lovingly and tenderly, clearly spoken, often repeated, spoken to our faith from the

other side, verified again and again in our hope and peace.

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets in divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."[1]

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; *if it were not so I would have told you;* for I go to prepare a place

[1] Heb. i. 1–2.

for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." [1]

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard

[1] John xiv. 1–3.

a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away, and he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold I make all things new."[1]

[1] Rev. xx. (R. V.).

Some few years ago, in the city of New York, a gentleman of ample means lived the usual comfortable life enjoyed in the handsome residences of that great city of luxurious homes. One little daughter had been given him, the recreation and joy of his life. The end of the business day brightened, because he would soon go home to her. On the way, he saw her more and more clearly, as the distance lessened separating them. He read the evening paper vacantly on the slowly moving car, a smile coming into his face

sometimes, caused not by anything he read, but in response to the face which in imagination he already saw shining with smiles expecting him home. His arms tingled with the joy of clasping her to his heart, and her kisses were real to him, blocks away from the lips he was to kiss.

Then came death, and never afterward could his imagination make her real to him, till in a dream he seemed to see her, — changed only in that she was brighter, more beautiful, more

eager to speak to him. He received from the dream that which was ever after a message from her; and in its fulfilment, his life once more became natural and joyous. He realized that she was denied to him in sight and words and touch, and was given to him in a nameless, incomprehensible way, that brought her to him, exalting him to an elevation of being never before suggested to him. She seemed to win him to bless other homes, and he awoke from the paralysis of sorrow to a new life of

usefulness, in which the old joy of his own home was restored, in sharing the pleasure of fathers and mothers receiving back their lost, living daughters. He never again felt himself far away from his own daughter, who, in a life continued just outside sight and words and touch, seemed to move with him in every good deed.

On through the years since then, he has been busy, and never before so practical, never so happy. A new tenderness came into

his heart, a new meaning into his prayers. All the activities of every day were conducted in the gentle sense of a higher partnership, which was very real to him, and inexpressibly sweet. His large business has grown larger. The life of his bereaved home is warmer, richer, deeper; this beautiful world is more beautiful, and the sunshine brighter. His increased wealth he turns into wider blessing to others. He works on, loving others under the ministration of his heaven-

taught daughter. He sees her, clad spiritually in the realm of spirits, at liberty from the hindrances of human life, how near to him who can tell; how fully associated with him in the work that has given her to him again, who can tell? He still "sees through a glass darkly," but sees more clearly, and is steadily held close to a purpose which might bring any bright spirit eagerly to earth, as Jesus came, to save us all.

Life is continuous. It begins; it never ends. On death the clay is laid aside; a new body is given, a spiritual body. A spiritual body has no nerves to become exhausted; it does not waste tissue. It never carries insufficient or impure blood to a brain. We now sometimes have faith, hope, love; how should we have them if we were never eclipsed, or wearied, or turned aside? How blessed the stimulus wrought within us when our heart must follow its love into the spirit life hungering; then

satisfied by the sweet association of that wiser and holier realm! Death is God's artist, fashioning in us higher ideals through our absent loved ones; it is God's poet, singing new songs in human nature, tuned so tenderly and so strongly in the pure melody of the life where our friends have gone.

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